

## ***142 “Are we nearly there yet?”***

Do you recognise that plea, coming from the back of the car? It’s been a long journey since I pleaded for a gospel that was attractive to friends and family [1], something that sounded like actual **good** news. So, am I nearly there yet? Can I help Clara, for example [140,141]?

As I asked last time, can I – can we – help to make God’s positive kingdom a reality?

Do you remember the start of your own faith journey? Did you have that experience of coming to faith, and it all feeling so exciting and so wonderful? You just couldn’t stop talking about it!

I’ve had that twice now – 1967 and 2017 – the latter when I rediscovered my faith: I came back to that excitement, I regained my first love, and it hasn’t gone away – it’s been thrilling!

What have I learnt? Why am I still so excited? What discoveries have kept that love alive?

Some stages I can give dates to:

2011 – total faith loss: “Does God even exist? Maybe it’s all made up.”

2012 – broke down and wept at a service for our 40 year Pembroke College CU reunion

... for five years trying to rebuild my faith (moved house in 2015)

2017 – ‘discovered’ the Trinity – God actually loves me! – God **IS** relationship.

2017 – ‘discovered’ the welcome of a local Anglican church (= total love and acceptance)

That’s when the writing started. God’s love was really real, but I’ve had to wrestle with the Scriptures. Some bits, if I faced them honestly, didn’t seem quite so loving.

It’s taken me over 140,000 words to process it, but God now looks very different to me – God looks like Jesus, and I think that even unbelievers are capable of seeing how amazing Jesus is.

### **What are my discoveries about Jesus/God?**

Jesus/God’s primary aim is to bring restoration to broken people (because evil destroys people).

Jesus/God’s other crucial aim is to bring restoration to broken systems in the world (because evil systems destroy people and destroy the world).

Together, to me, those add up to “the kingdom”.

### **How does Jesus/God bring this restoration?**

It’s a long-term project, and we need the **whole Bible** to show us the full panorama.

Jesus/God starts it all, and it is good – really, really good: walking with God.

Our wrong choices allow the forces of evil to pervert the good and destroy relationships.

Starting with Abraham, Jesus/God gradually tries to show us what God is like (not a fickle deity to be propitiated, as everyone thought at the time).

Jesus/God drops clever hints into the whole of the Old Testament, pointing to the culmination of the master plan:

“At just the right time...” Jesus/God comes (incarnation) into the evil mess; shows us what Jesus/God really looks like (life exemplar); dies to defeat evil, once and for all, by non-violence (Christus victor); dies to wipe away sin (expiation); dies in our place (substitution); rises to life (death is dead!); steps aside to non-visibility (ascension); sends the Holy Spirit to fill and empower us to work together to continue Jesus/God’s non-violent struggle against evil.

Evil is still very real, but evil is defeated through the cross, and ours is to continue that fight together.

Does that sound like **good news**? It does to me.

I can’t stop talking about it (as you might have noticed).

So, “Are we nearly there yet?”

Nearly, but article 143 is already in draft.

I pray that your journey will continue to draw you closer to our glorious God, so that together we can help Jesus/God’s kingdom to come on earth, as it is in heaven.

Paul Bev. 26.06.21